



# Emerging Adult's Perception on Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationship

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## Abstract

*The present exploratory study entitled "Emerging Adult's Perception on Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationship" was undertaken in Hyderabad city. Self developed questionnaire was used to collect data and data were collected from 30 unmarried male and 30 unmarried female respondents who were in the age group 20-25 years. The main purpose of the present study was to understand unmarried emerging adult's perception on Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationship and also to understand the gender differences in their perceptions on sexual relationships. Findings of the study revealed the gender differences in perception of Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationship. More male respondents compared to female respondents agreed on the concept of love at first sight and both male and female respondents perceived understanding is the most important component of love but people often mistake sexual attraction as love. Male respondents perceived sex as most important component of love where as female respondents perceived sex as not necessary; romance is psychological connection between two people. Male respondents considered physical appearance whereas female respondents considered good job as a most important characteristics to impress opposite sex. Males considered moving apart and females considered family compulsions are the main reasons of breakup of romantic love. Males perceived that in love relationship partners are generally expected to help partner as and when required and females perceived partners are expected to not get involved with other activities and give full attention to them. Majority of male respondents considered homosexuality as normal. In contrast female respondents considered it as abnormal behaviour. Most of the male respondents said sexual intercourse is acceptable if the couple is dating regularly whereas females disagreed on this point. Male and female respondents perceived that people generally get involved in premarital sexual relationship when they consider themselves in romantic relationship and male respondents said that fear of contacting STD and female respondents said that fear of pregnancy is a major repercussion of premarital sexual relationship.*

**Keywords:** Emerging Adult, homosexuality, perception, pre marital sexual relationship, romantic love.

## Introduction

Human sexuality is how people experience the erotic and express themselves as sexual beings; the awareness of themselves as males or females; the capacity they have for erotic experiences and responses. Human sexuality can be described as the way someone is sexually attracted to another person of the opposite sex (heterosexuality), to the same sex (homosexuality), to both sexes (bisexuality), or attracted to no sexes in a sexual way.

Emerging adulthood has been characterized, in part, as a time to explore sexuality and to gain sexual experience<sup>1</sup>. Part of this sexual exploration may involve experimenting with casual sex behaviors. Sex in emerging adulthood is full of contradictions. Biologically, young people ages 18– 29 are mature adults, with the same flow of hormones and basic physical drives that the species has experienced throughout history. Socially, however, emerging adults are not quite "full" adults. They are completing their education, gaining entry-level work experience, and slowly attaining financial and personal independence. In short, most are not entirely prepared for married life with a consistent and

socially sanctioned sexual partner whom their parents or grandparents might have enjoyed at the same age.

Premarital sex referred to acts of intercourse between a *couple* that occurred prior to marrying. In 2006, the Guttmacher Institute released a report about the historic prevalence of premarital sex. Their news: about 95% of the American public had their first experience of intercourse before getting married. Even 90% of women born in the 1940s said the same. Add Health estimates are not much different from this: 89% of young adults in the Sexual Behavior in Young Adulthood women report sex before marriage. Only 3% postponed sex until marriage, and another 8% are not married and still virgins. Among men, 91% had sex before marriage, less than 2% married before having intercourse, and 8% remain virgins<sup>2</sup>.

Half of the Indian population still believes premarital sex is taboo. Men led more sexually satisfied lives than women. Women are still more loyal to their partner-while almost 71 per cent women have had only one sexual partner, 37 per cent men have experimented with more than one. 25 per cent couples

accept pre marital sex if it doesn't involve their families. Yet 32 per cent of them indulge in premarital sex themselves. 19 percent couples are open to premarital sex and live-in relationship<sup>3</sup>.

Romance does not have to fizzle out in long-term relationships and progress into a companionship/friendship-type love, a new study has found. Romantic love can last a lifetime and lead to happier, healthier relationships. Study found that those who reported greater romantic love were more satisfied in both the short- and long-term relationships. Companion-like love was only moderately associated with satisfaction in both short- and long-term relationships. And those who reported greater passionate love in their relationships were more satisfied in the short term compared to the long term. Couples who reported more satisfaction in their relationships also reported being happier and having higher self-esteem<sup>4</sup>.

Among a sample of undergraduates, the antecedents to casual sex have been found to vary according to gender. Men with lower levels of depression are more likely to be classified as having casual sex. Interestingly, the opposite is true for women. Women with a greater number of depressive symptoms are more likely to report having casual sex<sup>5</sup>.

Among the sexually active, 72% reported having regretted on participating in at least one sexual event in their past. Morality was the top reason cited for such regret. The stable predictor of regret was number of partners: the more partners they had, the more likely they were to report sexual regrets<sup>6</sup>.

Research on sexual relationships in the Indian context is few, though popular surveys by market research groups and magazines are taken up once in a while. Since sexual behaviours are a reflection on sexual perceptions that people hold, it was felt important to study this aspect. This study was therefore taken up with the following objectives.

**Objectives:** To study the Emerging Adults perception on romantic love, homosexuality and pre marital sexual relationship. To study the gender differences in the perception of romantic love, homosexuality and pre marital sexual relationship.

## Methodology

**Research design:** Exploratory research design was used to investigate the present study.

**Sampling procedure: Sampling criteria:** Educated middle class and upper middle class group age 20-25 year was selected for study.

**Area:** Data was collected in the city of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

**Sampling technique:** Purposive sampling technique was used for the study (since persons who were willing to fill the questionnaire was included for the study).

**Population:** people under the age group of 20- 25 years, both men and women.

**Sample size:** 60 respondents were selected for the study in which 30 respondents were male and 30 respondents were female.

**Tools:** A questionnaire was developed for the present study which includes 16 questions divided into 3 sections to understand the perception on Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationship among emerging adults.

**Analysis:** Frequency percentages in Figures were used along with weighted scores for Ranked Items

**Weighted Score:** For Ranked Scores weighted Scores were calculated by giving each rank a score in Descending order of the ranks. For Instance, If there were 12 options for ranking, Rank 1 would get a score of 12. For each item, the weighted scores were calculated as follows

Rank 1 x Number of Respondents giving that rank x Score + Rank 2 Number of Respondents giving that rank x Score ..... = Final Score

Items were then placed in Descending order of the Final Scores they achieve

## Result and Discussion

**Romantic Love:** More than 50 per cent of males agreed on the point that the concept of love at first sight exists, whereas fewer females (40 per cent) compared to males said that there is any such thing. They don't believe on the concept of love at first sight.

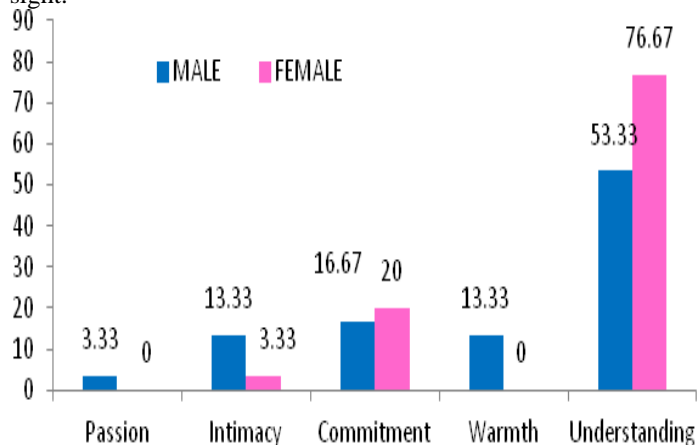
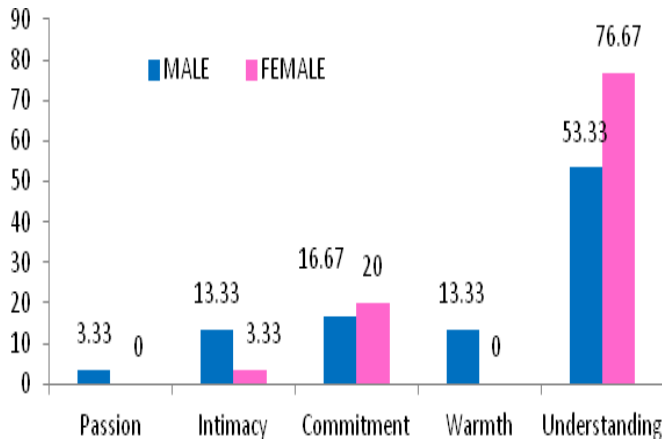
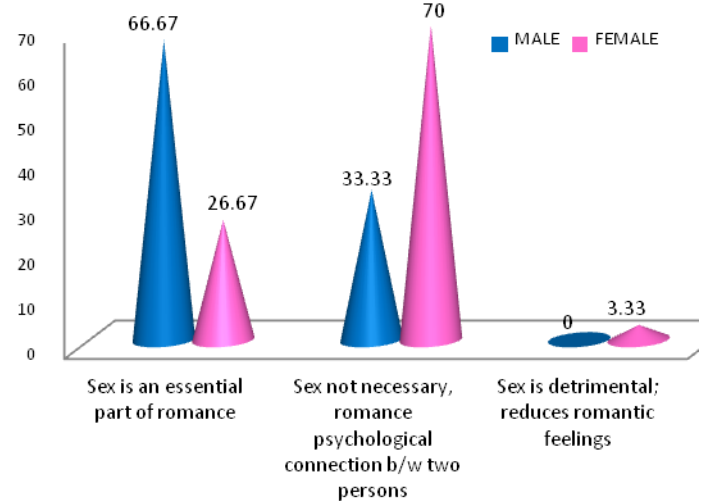


Figure-1.1  
Perception on Concept of "love at first sight"



**Figure-1.2**  
 Perception on most important component of love

Figure 1.2 depicts that both male and female respondents felt that understanding is the most important component of love. They felt until and unless they don't understand each other it is difficult for them to maintain love or romantic relationship. 53.33 per cent males and 76.67 percent females considered it as a most important component of love. Few males and females also voted for commitment and considered it as important component but very few respondents considered passion, intimacy and warmth as important components of love.



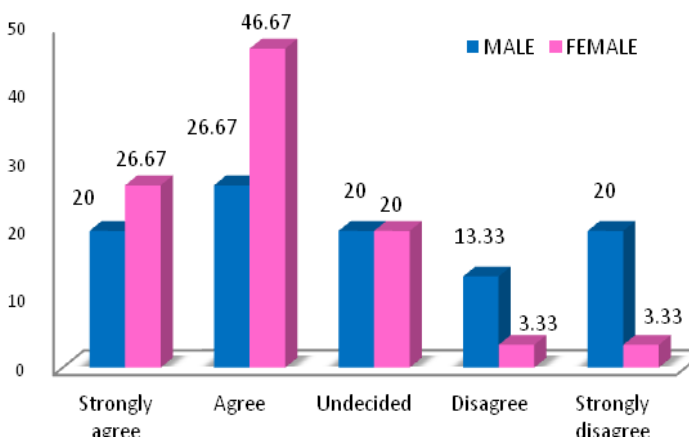
**Figure-1.4**

When asked emerging adult's perception on connection between romance and sex, most of the male respondents said that sex is an essential part of romance (66.67 per cent) compared to female respondents (26.67 per cent); females believed that sex is not necessary; romance is psychological connection between two people (70 per cent). Only 4 per cent females and no male said that sex is detrimental; reduces romantic feeling.

According to table 1.1 Males perceived that the main reason for the breakup of romantic love is moving apart from partner, which shows that males are generally less emotionally involve in romantic relationships compared to females, and for them absence of romantic partner in love relationship leads breakup. Lacking in warmth, Loss of attraction, and differences in opinion are the other important reasons of breakup of romantic relationship for males. Females perceived that family compulsions are the main reason for breakup of romantic relationships which indicates that females are still not independent to take their own decisions about their partner. This is another indication of the fact that they are more attached to their family and family values and norms. Lacking in warmth, being suggested to breakup by friends and family members and moving apart are the other important reasons for breakup of romantic relationships according to females.

Table 1.2 depicts that males perceived, in a love relationship partners are generally expected to help partner, be with partner as and when desired, agree with partner, dress well, whereas females perceived that in love relationships partners are generally expected to not get involved with other activities, be with partner as and when desired, dress well and not disagree with partner.

**Homosexuality:** More number of females compared to males perceived homosexuality as an abnormal activity going against human nature. 66.67 per cent males and only 13.33 per cent females said that it is normal; some people have this sexual orientation. 86.67 per cent females said that it is an abnormality,



**Figure-1.3**  
 Perception on people often mistake sexual attraction as love

**Perception on connect between romance and sex:** According to Figure 1.3 Most of the emerging adults agreed on the point that people often mistake sexual attraction as love but more females compared to males perceived the same, shows more mature nature of emerging adult females compared to males. Approximately 74 per cent females and 47 per cent males agreed on the point that people often mistake sexual attraction as love where as 34 per cent male and 8 per cent female disagreed on this point.

going against human nature again depicts conservative attitude of female respondents.

**Pre marital sexual relationships:** According to figure 3.1 many male respondents (66.67 per cent) perceived that sexual intercourse is acceptable if the couple is dating regularly/engaged. Whereas most of the females (66.67 per cent) disagreed on this point and said it is not acceptable even though couples are engaged and dating regularly. They also perceived that males are generally responsible for initiating premarital sexual relationship. When asked their opinion on this 70 per cent male and approximately 97 per cent female said that

males generally initiate premarital sexual relationship whereas only 30 per cent males and only 3 per cent females said females initiate premarital sexual relationship.

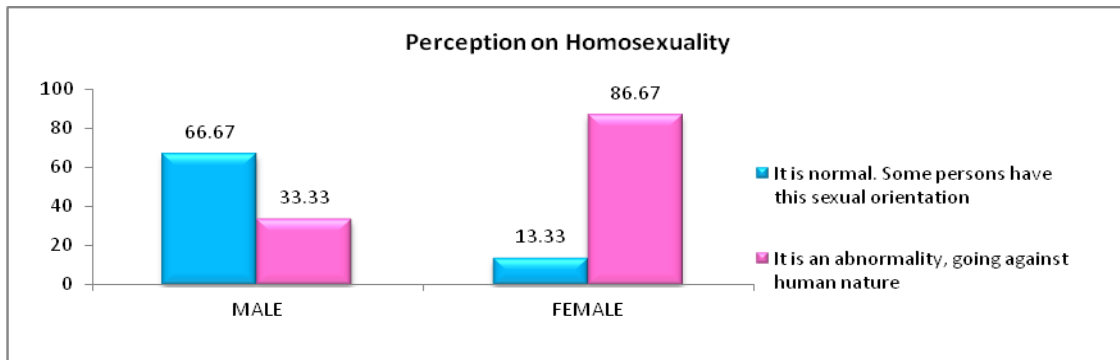
When respondents were asked to compare the situation of premarital sexual relationships in India from past to present, most of the respondents said that Pre marital sexual relationships have increased and very few said that it has decreased. 66.67 per cent males and 90 per cent females said that pre marital sexual relationships have increased whereas 33 per cent male and 6.67 per cent female said that it has remained the same.

**Table-1.1**  
**Main reasons of breakup of a romantic relationship**

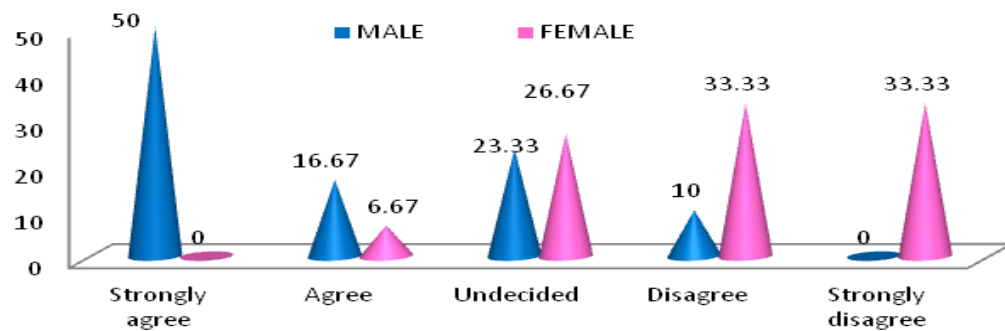
MALE			FEMALE		
Preferences	Weighted Score	Rank	Preferences	Weighted Score	Rank
Moving apart	286	1	Family compulsions	284	1
Lacking in warmth	258	2	Lacking in warmth	279	2
Loss of attraction	247	3	Being suggested to breakup	269	3
Differences in opinion	226	4	Moving apart	245	4
Self centered behaviour	220	5	Uncooperative with sex	233	5
Poor listening skills	219	6	Loss of job	223	6
Other attractions	200	7	Difference of opinion	207	7
Family compulsions	179	8	Other attractions	206	8
Being suggested to breakup	173	9	Poor listening skills	171	9
Boredom	163	10	Loss of attraction	155	10
Uncooperative with sex	155	11	Self centered behaviour	120	11
Loss of job	96	12	Boredom	111	12

**Table-1.2**  
**Partners Expectations in Love Relationship**

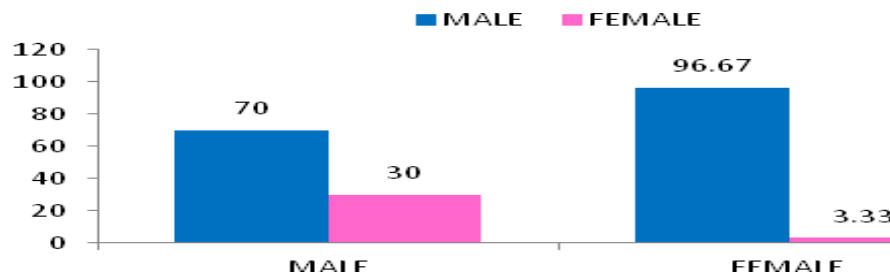
MALE			FEMALE		
Preferences	Weighted Score	Rank	Preferences	Weighted Score	Rank
Help partner	244	1	Not get involved with other activities	281	1
Be with partner when desired	234	2	Be with partner when desired	274	2
Agree with partner	232	3	Dress well	268	3
Dress well	227	4	Not disagree with partner	259	4
Be nice to family/friends/ relatives	215	5	Help partner	253	5
Not get involved with other interesting activities	207	6	Be nice to family/friends/ relatives	242	6
Pay attention to partner	200	7	Appreciate	238	7
Willingness for sex	182	8	Pay attention to partner	188	8
Be subservient to partner	166	9	Be dependent on partner	152	9
Be dependent on partner	151	10	Agree with partner	139	10
Not disagree with partner	139	11	Willingness for sex	100	11
Appreciate	138	12	Be subservient to partner	92	12



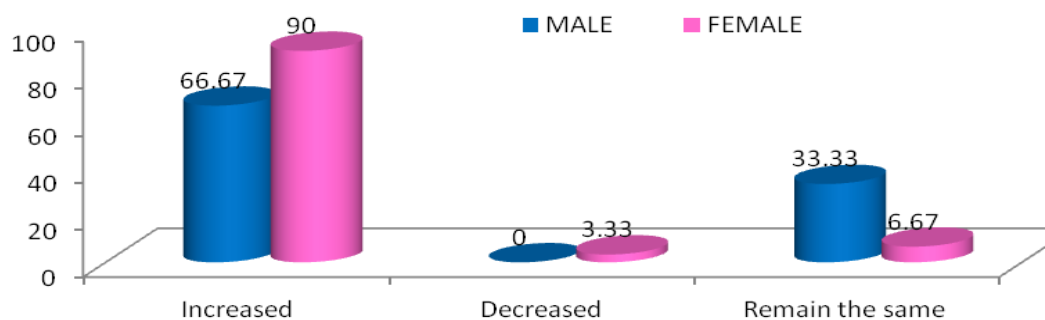
**Figure-2.1**  
 Perception on Homosexuality



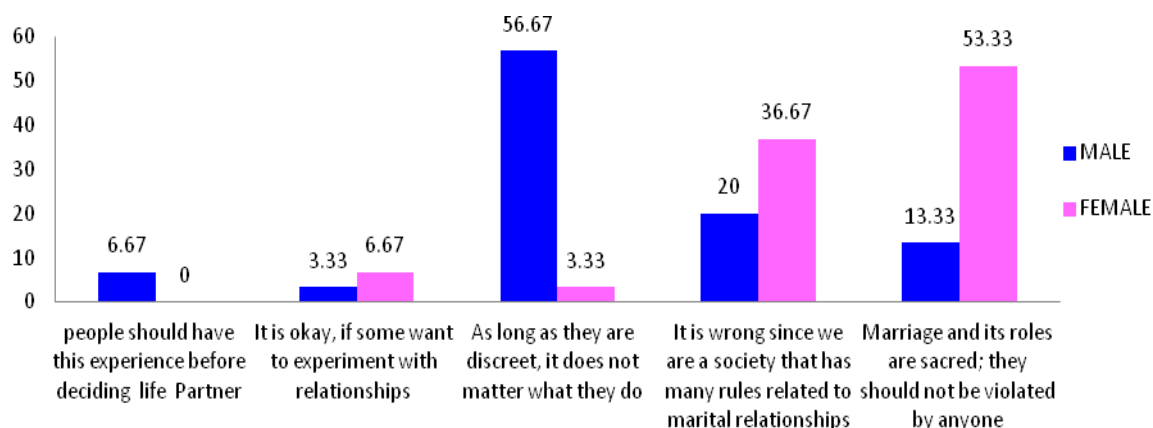
**Figure-3.1**  
 Perception on acceptance of sexual intercourse in the case of regular dating



**Figure3.2**  
 Perception on initiation of premarital sexual relationship



**Figure-3.3**  
 Perception on present status of Pre marital sexual relationship



**Figure-3.4**  
**Perception on premarital sexual relationships**

**Table-3.1**  
**Circumstances in which people generally get involved in premarital sexual relationship**

MALE			FEMALE		
Preferences	Percentile	Rank	Preferences	Percentile	Rank
Consider themselves in love	226	1	Consider themselves in love	277	1
Sexually attractive partner	218	2	Due to fear, person will hurt them	259	2
Everyone is doing	214	3	Fear of losing person’s companionship	237	3
Experience thrill	212	4	Sexually attractive partner	233	4
Anticipating new and exciting	196	5	Please particular person	217	5
Fear of losing person’s companionship	188	6	Understand the partner Better	205	6
Understand the partner better	179	7	Anticipating new and exciting	157	7
Out of boredom	157	8	Experience thrill	148	8
Please particular person	144	9	Everyone is doing	144	9
Understand self better	141	10	Understand self better	130	10
Due to fear, person will hurt them	129	11	Out of boredom	109	11

When asked respondents perception on premarital sexual relationships most of the female respondents (53.33 per cent) compared to male respondents said that marriage and its roles are sacred; and it should not be violated by any one. Whereas 56.67 per cent male respondents thought that as long as they are discreet, it does not matter what they do. 20 per cent males and 36.67 per cent females said it is wrong since we are in society that has many rules related to marital relationships. It was not surprising to note that in traditional Indian culture very less percentage of males and females perceived that people should have this experience before deciding their life partner and it is okay, if someone wants to experiment with such relationship.

Table 3.1 depicts that most of the male respondents perceived that people generally get involved in premarital sexual relationship when they consider themselves in a romantic relationship, with a sexually attractive partner and when other friends in the group are also involved in such relationships and few involve in premarital sexual relationship only to experience thrill whereas male respondents considered due to fear that person will hurt them as a least important reason. Females

perceived that the major reasons to get involved in premarital sexual relationship are to consider themselves in love, due to fear that person will hurt them if they don’t get involved in sexual relationship and some time fear of losing the person’s companionship, whereas the least important circumstances in which they get involved in premarital sexual relationship are to understand self better and out of boredom.

According to table 3.2 male respondents perceived major repercussions of premarital sex as fear of contracting sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, fear of losing self respect, and fear that partner can use incidents as evidence to threaten. Fear of guilt and lose interest in sex were not considered as major repercussions of premarital sexual relationship according to male respondents. Female respondents thought pregnancy, lose interest in each other, lose face with other friends and fear that partner can use incidents as evidence to threaten as important repercussions. According to female respondents lose interest in sex is the least important repercussion of premarital sexual relationship.

**Table-3.2**  
**Repercussions of premarital sex**

MALE			FEMALE		
Preferences	Percentile	Rank	Preferences	Percentile	Rank
Fear of contacting STD	239	1	Pregnancy	288	1
Pregnancy	227	2	Lose interest in each other	236	2
Fear of losing self respect	222	3	Lose face in other friends	225	3
Fear, partner use incidents as evidence to threaten	220	4	Fear, partner use incidents as evidence to threaten	223	4
Fear, future prospects of a good marriage are lost	205	5	Fear of Guilt	222	5
Fear partner leave the relationship	196	6	Fear partner leave the relationship	210	6
Fear of losing reputation in society	196	7	Fear of losing self respect	209	7
Lose interest in each other	191	8	Fear, future prospects of a good marriage are lost	204	8
Lose face with family	181	9	Lose face with family	193	9
Lose face in other Friends	172	10	Fear of losing self respect	168	10
Fear of Guilt	153	11	Fear of contacting STD	167	11
Lose interest in sex	129	12	Lose interest in sex	145	12

The occurrence of premarital sexual behaviors for adolescents and adults alike has become increasingly more accepted in today's society<sup>7</sup>. With 69% of female adolescents and 64% of male adolescents aged 18-19 having had experienced sexual intercourse although never married<sup>8</sup>, specific concerns for unmarried sexually active individuals are apparent. If unwed individuals are not taking advantage of the various forms of contraception, the risk of an unwanted pregnancy is present. The four leading STDs in the U.S., which account for 14.5 million new STD cases each year, are Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Trichomoniasis, Chlamydia, and Genital Herpes; these four STDs are transmitted by skin-to-skin contact and cannot be prevented by any form of protection available<sup>9</sup>. The most prevalent STD, HPV, is the cause of nearly 100% of all cervical cancer worldwide<sup>10</sup> which supports the above finding that major repercussion of premarital sex as fear of contracting sexual transmitted disease.

The 5.5 million male adolescents and 5.2 million female adolescents aged 15-19 who reported never having had sexual intercourse listed religion and morality (31.4% of males; 37.8% of females) and the fear of pregnancy (25.2% of males; 18.7% of females) as the main reasons for their sexual abstinence<sup>8</sup>. Another study found that individuals who chose to remain sexually abstinent reported four reasons for their decisions: inadequate love within the relationship, fear of STDs and pregnancy, beliefs supporting sexual abstinence, and feelings of inadequacy or insecurity<sup>11</sup>.

Table 3.3 depicts that emerging adults male perceived that

major reasons of premarital sex are delay in marriage, easy availability of abortion facilities, easy availability of birth control methods, and legal approval of live-in relationships whereas emerging adults female perceived that the main reasons of premarital sex are limited parental expectations, no parental supervision, moving out of parental home, western style work environments, easy availability of abortion facilities etc.

**Conclusion**

The results of the study revealed, on an overall basis that there were very clear gender differences in Emerging Adult's Perception on Romantic Love, Homosexuality and Pre Marital Sexual Relationships. Women showed more mature attitude on concept of romantic love and premarital sexual relationships but they also had gender stereotypical perceptions on some concepts of romantic love, homosexual and premarital sexual relationships. Study showed that in present Indian society, where most of the young generations are influenced by western culture, our young adult women give more importance to their family in taking any decision on premarital and romantic relationships. Men's perception on these topics, depicts that they are more liberal and independent in taking decision on romantic love and premarital sexual relationship and considered homosexuality as normal whereas women considered it totally abnormal behaviour which also depicts that in present young adult males are ready to adopt change in society where as women still consider these issues personal and something which should not be discussed in public.



**Table-3.3**  
**Main reasons for premarital sex**

MALE			FEMALE		
Preferences	Per centil e	Ra nk	Preferences	Per centil e	Ra nk
Delay in marriage	222	1	Limited parental expectations	236	1
Easy availability of abortion facilities	207	2	No parental supervision	229	2
Easy availability of birth control methods	194	3	Moving out of parental homes	228	3
Legal approval of live - in relationships	191	4	Western style work environments	227	4
Gender role equality leading to females becoming sexually active	183	5	Easy availability of abortion facilities	215	5
Western style work environments	180	6	Easy availability of birth control methods	192	6
Moving out of parental homes	175	7	Delay in marriage	176	7
No parental supervision	172	8	Legal approval of live - in relationships	168	8
Night shift jobs	168	9	Easy accessibility to potential partners with the advent of cell phones, social networking sites	166	9
Limited parental expectations	152	10	Night shift jobs	159	10
Easy accessibility to potential partners with the advent of cell phones, social networking sites	139	11	Gender role equality leading to females becoming sexually active	126	11

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